

How will today's 8 year olds want to study in 2026 and what will they want to learn?

Let me cast your mind back to that awkward first night at university. You're in a new city, you've barely unpacked and you don't know anyone. But people are desperate to make your acquaintance; any friend is better than no friend. With each new person you meet you're inevitably asked "What do you study?" You tell them English Literature. "Oh, I bet that's a lot of reading", they say, "I could never do that". You ask them what they study. "Mathematics", they reply. "Oh, I bet that's a lot of calculations", you tell them, "I could never do that". Why is this the case? Why are we so desperate to align ourselves as an Arts or a Sciences student and in the process drop any previous affinity we might have had for 'the other side'. We've all completed GCSEs; I achieved an A* in English Literature and an A* in Mathematics. Yet somehow I find myself on a path towards a BA and not a Bsc and I can't help but wonder *are we looking at the death of the polymath?*

Frequently students dismiss the courses their contemporaries study; History students are told "Why bother, that's all old news" or a Classics student informed "Latin's a dead language you know". I would be willing to bet there's not a Geography student out there who hasn't been told their degree is just 'colouring in'. I think such flippant statements stem from jealousy, not actual contempt for the respective disciplines. Most students have a nagging feeling that their degree is not enough, and this is probably because they're stuck on one side of the Arts/Sciences wall and can't get across to the other side, let alone see over the top.

Imagine if in 2026 the 8 year olds of today were all studying joint honours courses. A Biology student could shout "Cut!" and it would mean they were directing a film, rather than dissecting a heart, because their degree is in Biology and Film Studies. A Law student could be studying a Land Law case and also the Second Law of Thermodynamics, because their degree is Law and Physics. Probably something as banal as timetabling prevents these combinations, not that people couldn't succeed in them. There must be an algorithm for it, but I wouldn't know, I'm only an English student.

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